

INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY HAS SAID ENOUGH ABOUT KAL 007: NSA CHIEF

The U.S. has already said enough about intelligence aspects of the Soviet Union's downing of the Korean Air Lines 747 on Sept. 1, the head of the National Security Agency said during a rare public appearance.

Air Force Lt. Gen. Lincoln D. Faurer said in a speech Friday night at a dinner meeting of the National Military Intelligence Assn. at Fort McNair in Washington that, "...As a result of the Korean Air Lines affair you have read and heard more about my business in the past two weeks than I would desire..."

The NSA director, speaking on the final day of the NMIA's annual two-day convention, added, however, that "for the most part, this has not been a matter of unwelcome leaks. It is the result of a conscious, responsible decision to address an otherwise unbelievable horror."

Before his address, Faurer told The DAILY that the intelligence community had agreed to go to a certain level in releasing information about the affair. Going below that level, he said, would have created additional controversy, and going above it would have compromised U.S. abilities to monitor the activities of other countries.

During his address, Faurer said, "The risk was taken and some penalty must certainly be paid, in the sense of the intelligence that has been made available. My intention, and that of the intelligence community, is that it's now time to circle the wagons and stop talking. Contrary to any speculation which bringing down the veil (of secrecy) will generate, the only intended hiding is of sources and methods. The story has been told accurately and to push further will not provide valuable clarification, but rather will put unnecessarily at risk future intelligence support to our national security."

Later in his address, Faurer said that "Although you hear often the allegation of intelligence failures, the truth is that in almost all cases, our (United States) intelligence service has proven to be effective and timely. The public doesn't hear us crow of this, however, since discussion would prove a valuable signal to those whose interests are inimical to ours and as such jeopardize sensitive sources and methods. Certainly we face some awesome challenges in working against a closed society with such maniacal obsession for secrecy that it shoots down lost civilian airliners..."

Faurer was asked by The DAILY before his address if the U.S. was capable of monitoring the Korean Air Lines affair in real time. He declined to answer the question, but a comment during his address indicates the U.S. does have such abilities. "...Today," he said, "collection technologies supporting communications, while offering opportunities for further improvement, are permitting an expression of requirement that directs urgency on the (intelligence) analyst to digest a great deal very quickly and to make very rapid assessments. This situation puts a premium on analyst preparation and makes the job a more stressful one."

Analysis of intelligence data in "the good old days" was not as fast-paced, Faurer told his audience. There was a time "when the amount of information available and its delayed and piecemeal rate of arrival at the analyst's desk permitted, in fact required, him or her to develop assessments in a very reflective, measured pace. It wasn't that the need for greater timeliness wasn't present, it was simply that today's abundance of information and dramatically shortened time lines were unimaginable. Requirements in those days reflected that practicality."

During a question-and-answer period, Faurer was asked about declassification of intelligence history. He noted the "rash of books" now emerging on cryptologic aspects of World War II and said there was a controversy within NSA on what to do about it. The subject is sensitive because "There are still things that shouldn't be said," according to Faurer. He said NSA decided to try to keep as much about World War II cryptologic activities as it could in the classified realm.